

NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 30, 2004

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County ensures emergency water supply for Wrightwood

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday took action in response to a severe water shortage in the community of Wrightwood by proclaiming a local state of emergency, which authorizes the county to ship water into the community from other sources.

The County Special Districts Department went into action immediately and authorized Southern California Water Company (SCWC), the private water provider for Wrightwood, to haul water from County Service Area 70, Zone L, in Piñon Hills to Wrightwood. Approximately 46,000 gallons were hauled between noon and 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

Beginning today, SCWC is authorized to haul water from Zone L from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., contingent upon Zone L's capability to provide the water without negative impact to its system. In the event Zone L cannot supply water during this time period, the Hesperia Water District will provide water. The Hesperia Water District has authorized SCWC to haul water from its system between 9 p.m. and midnight on a daily basis, contingent upon water availability. The Baldy Mesa Water District is also on standby to provide back-up water to Zone L, if necessary, to insure water deliveries to Wrightwood. All of the water systems involved are being monitored on an ongoing basis to make sure additional shortages do not occur. SCWD has agreed to reimburse the assisting water providers.

Additionally, the San Bernardino County Fire Department has modified response procedures to ensure additional water tenders arrive at the scene of any fire. The department is also attempting to place an additional water tender in the community to be on hand at all times. The department is considering other measures to make sure Wrightwood is protected from fire during this water shortage.

"Our top priority at this time is to make sure Wrightwood has the water it needs for domestic uses and fire protection," said County Supervisor Bill Postmus, whose First District includes Wrightwood. "The action taken by the Board of Supervisors is already making a positive difference in Wrightwood."

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An acute water shortage has occurred in Wrightwood to the extent that there is a threat of no water in certain portions of the water supply system. Southern California Water Company supplies approximately 2,630 connections. SCWC is a privately held water company and is entirely responsible for providing domestic quality water to meet domestic and fire flow requirements.

Wrightwood has not run out of water. The Board of Supervisors took action to be proactive and to ensure that water is available for both ordinary usage and in case of fire. However, in the event of an emergency in Wrightwood, there would not be adequate water for domestic use or to fight a fire.

Due to the ongoing drought and unexplained changes in the aquifer, well production level in Wrightwood dropped from 800 to 620 gallons per-minute in mid-June and continues to decline. The production levels are approaching those seen during the water supply emergency that began in July 2002.

The water hauling made possible by the Board's action on Tuesday will continue until the water situation has stabilized and water production can meet consumer demands. SCWC is in contact with the State Department of Health Services to bring a new water well on line.

The Southern California Water Company has provided information to the public advising citizens of the water shortage in the community through newspaper articles and highway signage. A community meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday, July 1, 2004, at Wrightwood Elementary School, 1175 Highway 2.